

## **Weekly Diabetes Update**

### **7-27-07**

#### **1. U.S. Diabetes Rate Soars**

CDC: No End in Sight as Diabetes Epidemic Gains Speed By Daniel J. DeNoon WebMD  
Medical News Reviewed by Louise Chang, MD

June 25, 2007 (Chicago) - The U.S. diabetes epidemic is picking up speed like a "runaway train," the CDC says.

Type 2 diabetes makes up 90% to 95% of these cases. Unlike type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes is preventable.

But that doesn't mean Americans are preventing it. On the contrary, 7% of the U.S. population -- nearly 21 million of us -- already have diabetes. And the diabetes epidemic is growing by almost 5% a year, according to a study led by Linda S. Geiss, MA, the CDC's chief of diabetes surveillance.

Geiss presented the study findings at the American Diabetes Association's 67th Annual Scientific Sessions, held June 22-26 in Chicago.

"We found that diabetes and obesity are growing together," Geiss says. "It has grown for the last 15 years and there is no hint of it slowing down."

Can we stop the epidemic? No, Geiss says -- not until we find the brakes.

"The strength and magnitude of the change is so great, this is not something we can stop overnight," she says. "Like a runaway train, we must slow it down before we can stop it."

Geiss's team looked at data from U.S. health surveys covering the years 1963 to 2005. They found three distinct stages in the diabetes epidemic:

- \* 1963 to 1975 was a period of a sharp increase in diabetes. Prevalence increased from 13.6 to 25.8 per 1,000 Americans.

- \* Diabetes leveled off in 1975, and did not increase until 1990. It's not clear exactly why this happened. It could simply be a result of the standardization of diabetes diagnosis in 1975.

- \* "Then, in 1990, diabetes really took off," Geiss says. Prevalence shot up from 26.4 to 54.5 per 1,000 people.

Ann Albright, PhD, RD, director of the CDC's division of diabetes translation, says this diabetes surge could undo the progress that's been achieved in fighting heart disease.

"With diabetes beginning to strike at younger ages, we may reverse the trends we have seen in reducing heart disease," Albright said at an ADA news conference. "Obesity and diabetes are important public health problems."

Heart disease isn't the only issue; diabetes also affects small blood sight-threatening eye condition called diabetic retinopathy.

Another study with CDC researcher James Boyle, PhD, shows that by 2050, diabetes will affect the eyes of nearly 18 million Americans.

"We project the number of people with diabetic retinopathy and vision-threatening diabetic retinopathy to triple," Boyle and colleagues reported at the ADA. "The number of whites and blacks 50 years of age and older with diabetes who have cataracts will probably increase 238% from 2005 to 2050. Additionally, between 2005 and 2050, our projections suggest a 12-fold increase in the number of Hispanics with diabetes 65 years and older who have glaucoma."

Hearing may also be an issue for people with diabetes. A study with researcher Catherine C. Cowie, PhD, of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, shows that diabetes doubles a person's risk of hearing impairment.

The study suggests that 40% of people with diabetes may suffer some degree of hearing impairment.

Can the U.S. really afford to do what's needed to derail the diabetes epidemic? It may be that we can't afford not to.

"The estimated annual cost of diabetes in the U.S. is \$132 billion -- and that is probably an underestimate," Albright said. "It will absolutely require a coordinated effort to turn things around."

SOURCES: American Diabetes Association 67th Annual Scientific Sessions, Chicago, June 22-26, 2007. Linda S. Geiss, MA, chief, diabetes surveillance, CDC, Atlanta. Ann Albright, PhD, RD, director, division of diabetes translation, CDC.